

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 SSC-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /085 W
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P 220800Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9510
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 892

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

USEC BRUSSELS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PDIP, LA, FR
SUBJECT: LAO BREAK RELATIONS WITH FRANCE

1. FRENCH CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JEAN-CLAUDE SCHLUMBERGER TOLD US AUGUST 22 THAT HE HAD BEEN CALLED TO THE LAO FOREIGN MINISTRY AUGUST 21 AND TOLD THAT ALL FRENCH DIPLOMATS AND FRENCH OFFICIAL PERSONNEL HAD TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM LAOS AND THE EMBASSY CLOSED. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ALLOWED TO MAINTAIN ONE GUARD ON THE PROPERTY. THE LAO HAD SAID THAT THEY WOULD BE WITHDRAWING THEIR EMBASSY PERSONNEL FROM PARIS.

2. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTION, SCHLUMBERGER SAID THAT THE LAO HAD SAID THAT THE ACTION WAS BEING TAKEN BECAUSE OF THE EMBASSY PERSONNEL'S "BAD ATTITUDE." HE SAID THAT THE
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LAO HAD AMPLIFIED THIS ACCUSTION BY MAKING THE SAME SORTS OF CHARGES THEY HAD MADE WHEN AMBASSADOR DUZER WAS WITHDRAWN IN JULY (VIENTIANE 0744).

3. SIANG PASASON REPORTED AUGUST 22 THAT SCHLUMBERGER HAD BEEN CALLED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY BY SOMBAT CHOUNLAMANY, DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT TWO. THE PAPER

SAID THAT SOMBAT GAVE SCHLUMBERGER AN AIDE MEMOIRE STATING THAT FRENCH OFFICIALS WERE CONTINUING OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES WHICH HAD ADVERSELY AFFECTED LAO-FRENCH RELATIONS. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THE CLOSING OF THE FRENCH EMBASSY.

4. COMMENT: THIS WOULD APPEAR TO BE YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE SELF-DEFEATING POLICIES WHICH THE LAO LEADERSHIP SEEMS DETERMINED TO FOLLOW (VIENTIANE 0880. AS A WESTERN EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC SOURCE COMMENTED TO US, THE CHANCES ARE GOOD THAT THE FRENCH WILL NOW BLOCK ANY EEC AID TO THE LAO. SUCH ACTION WOULD COME AT A PARTICULARLY INOPPORTUNE TIME IN VIEW OF THE AUGUST 21 LAO APPEAL FOR FLOOD AID (VIENTIANE 0888).

5. IN SPITE OF HANOI'S DOMINANT INFLUENCE OVER THE LPDR, WE DOUBT THAT THE SRV PUT THE LAO UP TO THIS ACTION. THE CURRENT LAO LEADERS SEEM INCAPABLE OF COMING TO TERMS WITH THEIR COLONIAL MEMORIES, AND THEIR FEELINGS TOWARD THE FRENCH CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS PARANOID. SCHLUMBERGER, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS HANDLED HIMSELF VERY WELL SINCE THE JULY REDUCTION OF THE FRENCH PRESENCE AND HAS NOT ENGAGED IN THE SNIPING AND DEROGATORY COMMENTS WHICH PROVED THE UNDOING OF FORMER DCM LAMBERT.

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6. THIS IS NOT TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE SRV WOULD NECESSARILY OBJECT TO THIS ACTION OR WANT TO BLOCK IT. HANOI MIGHT BE QUITE CONTENT TO SEE A SITUATION DEVELOP IN WHICH ITS RELATIONS WITH THE WEST IMPROVE WHILE THE LPDR'S DETERIORATE. HANOI WOULD THEN FIND ITSELF IN THE POSITION OF BEING THE LPDR'S CHANNEL TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD AND THUS IN A BETTER POSITION TO MAINTAIN CONTROL.
ROBERTS

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NNN

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